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ABSTRACT

The language immersion approach of the Intercultural Montessori School (Oak Park, Illinois) for children aged 2-6 years is described and discussed. An introductory section gives background information on early work with immersion by Maria Montessori, a personal experience leading to the school's establishment, and the response of language and education professionals, the public, and parents to the concept of preschool immersion. Subsequent sections discuss common patterns in the students' language learning experience at the school and the developmental stages the learners went through as the experiment progressed: pre-production; early production; speech emergence; and intermediate fluency. Anecdotal information about specific students and events are used for illustration. Observations about comprehensible input and the Montessori manipulables, whole language, and other instructional strategies are included. Specific recommendations are made for content and classroom procedures in early childhood immersion, based on this experience. The paper concludes with reflections on the potential of this environment for development of bilingualism. Contains 29 references. (MSE)

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ED 409 704

Early Childhood Bilingualism in the Montessori Children's House: Guessable Context and the Planned Environment

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InterCultura Montessori School

InterCultura Montessori School in Oak Park, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, is a foreign language immersion Montessori school for children ages 2½ through 6 years of age. According to the Illinois Resource Center for Bilingual Education (the agency which organizes the Illinois Bilingual Education Conference each year for the Illinois State Board of Education), InterCultura is "the only true immersion school in the State of Illinois" -- that is, the only school that follows the Canadian immersion school model. In the Canadian immersion school model, the teachers refrain from speaking the majority language under any circumstances for at least the first three years of the program.

The aim of the Canadian immersion model is to help children who are speakers of the majority language to become bilingual. When a program also includes children who are native speakers of the targeted minority language, the program is called a "dual language" or a "two-way bilingual" program. (Genessee, 1986.)

Most of our children at InterCultura are native speakers of English who come from monolingual, English-only families. But from the beginning, we have always had a small number of native speakers of our target languages. In the current jargon of linguistics, then, our school would be characterized as a two-way bilingual early childhood program.

During her years in India (1939-1946), Montessori also worked with this model. Having had the good fortune of invitations from the Theosophical Society and the Ghandian Peace Movement, Montessori passed World War II far from Europe, training teachers and helping to establish schools in various parts of the Indian subcontinent. Montessori left India shortly before Ghandi finally convinced the British colonial authorities to withdraw. India became an independent nation in 1947. (Trudeau, 1983.)

The reality of India is multilingual and multicultural. Today there are fifteen officially recognized national languages. Oddly enough, even though there is no substantial English ethnic community comparable to that of the English-speakers in South Africa, the founding fathers of India decided to declare English one of their fifteen national languages.

During two and a half centuries of British colonial rule, educated Indians developed the tradition of having their children

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schooled from early childhood directly in English. It was not the custom to give fifteen minute lessons once or twice a week on English customs, vocabulary and grammar. Instead the entire curriculum was presented to children directly in English.

The schools founded by Montessori in India followed this tradition. Montessori referred to them as "English medium schools", because the language of instruction (the "medium") was English. Current American linguists would refer to such schools as "English-language immersion Montessori schools".

In many parts of the world today -- in India, Pakistan, Brazil, Tanzania, the Phillipines and elsewhere -- there are English-language immersion Montessori schools. InterCultura is unique, however, in that English is not one of our primary target languages. Currently in our eleventh year, we have eleven years of experience with Spanish, five and a half years of experience with French, two and a half years of experience with Italian, and seven years of experience with Japanese -- Japanese being perhaps the only non-western language ever attempted as the target of a Montessori foreign language immersion program.

Voice of the Ithaloi,
Call of the Mountaineer

In 1985, my wife and I were expecting.

Although my own family had emigrated from Southern Italy to the United States beginning in the 1870's, by the time of my birth, the Italian language had virtually vanished from among my relatives. It was only as a college student that I acquired the rudiments of the language. I subsequenly spent fourteen months working in Naples, where I finally became fluent.

That was an important time for me. The milieu into whose grasp I fell was a warm and peopled hearth -- a hearth with an electronic flicker. It was the early 70's; national television had already accomplished more than Garibaldi (the hero of the Italian wars of unification) could have imagined. My grandmother was amused by my pictures of ancient, crumbling facades crowned with electric wires and television antennae. It was not the world that my grandmother had left in the face of tragic personal loss and deprivation -- just seven years of age in that year, 1907, she was never to set foot there again. Yet it was a world in which I would later experience a degree of acceptance and appreciation which I had never experienced and would never have suspected in all of my years in America. In this sense, really, I had stumbled into that world which my ancestors had lost.

I was not about to lose it again.

So, many years later, when we were expecting our first child,

Grace, it seemed logical to me that I speak to her directly every day, cupping my hands over my wife's belly so that Gracie might hear me a little more clearly. And it seemed only logical that I speak to Gracie in Italian: "Eccomi, Grazia. Sono io, tuo papa'." (Here I am, Gracie. It's me. Your Dad.)

The day that Grace was born, I was there in the birthing room at the hospital. We had done our La Maze classes. Everything was exhausting, but everything had gone well. As soon as the umbilical cord had been cut, the nurse carried Grace to a scale not far from where I was standing. It seemed only logical that I speak to Grace; and so I said: "Eccomi, Grazia. Sono io, tuo papa'." And much to my amazement, Grace struggled with all her might to lift her head. She gazed in my direction.

And I was smitten.

It was at that moment that I knew there would be an InterCultura.

Perhaps it will not surprise you that our second child, Phillip, now four and a half, sometimes asks me, "Papa', what is that thing called, you know, in my voice?"

With a voice, we can call across great depths, across frightening improbability. Without a voice, we are alone.

Initial Reactions

"You want to do what? You want to speak French to three year olds? What's the matter with you? Are you crazy?"

That was one common category of reaction.

There was a professor of linguistics at Northwestern University who said, "I'll tell you what to do: close that school down immediately. You are destroying any chance those children have to grow up with normal language abilities. The native language must be fully established before a child is exposed to a second language. What you are doing is shameless and immoral."

There was a Montessori teacher training program director, someone with illustrious AMI credentials including a claim of personal contact with Maria Montessori herself, who said: "I have seen children in so-called English medium Montessori schools abroad; but these are not Montessori schools. They try to teach children how to read in English rather than in their native language; and it is simply pathetic. It cannot be done. An English medium school is a basic violation of Montessori principles. It should not be allowed."

There was a professor of education at the University of Illinois who said: "Why would you ever attempt to do anything involving

language with an antiquated, anti-developmental model like Montessori? They children are forced to work alone on sterile individual projects. There is no social interaction and fantasy play is actively discouraged; so there is little if any possibility of normal language development, even in the child's first language. Haven't you examined any of the more current educational models?"

There was a woman's section reporter with a regular column in the Chicago Tribune who did an interview by phone, but failed to visit, and then wrote: "It's another trendy Tupperware thing for pretentious yuppies in the suburbs. Speak French to three year olds? Oh, come now."

Initially, even the relatives were against it. Most of them didn't know what to make of the school, but they were shocked and incredulous that at home Doris (a native of the Principality of Liechtenstein) would speak German and even a bit of her native Allemannisch with Grace. Both the Liechtensteiners and the Americans found it either odd or objectionable, as well, that I spoke with Gracie only in Italian. At InterCultura, Grace was a member of the comunaute' Antoine de Saint-Exupery, our French-language children's community. Everyone was convinced that Grace would never learn how to speak proper English; and that even if she did, certainly she would not learn how to read.

At the beginning of the current school year (Grace is in fifth grade now), we received the results of the California Aptitude Tests, a battery of standardized tests that the public schools administered to Grace last spring when she was ten. I am happy to report that Grace had no problem in dealing with the C.A.T., even though it's all in English. In fact, Grace's language arts subscore placed her in the ninety-eighth percentile, that is, her scores were higher than ninety-eight out of one hundred American children taking the C.A.T. last spring.

Last summer, we were able to send Grace to spend six weeks with Grandma and Grandpa and the relatives in Liechtenstein. Gracie spent part of the time with other relatives in Vienna. For some reason, Grace tends to favor Viennese pronunciation; but her word order more closely resembles Liechtenstein usage. Older German immigrants in the Chicago area tend to be very skeptical about this; many of them sent their own children to traditional, teacher-centered Saturday schools for instruction in the German language. After many years of instruction, almost none of the children have anything more than some vague recollections of colors, numbers, greetings, and occasionally fragments of folk songs. Meanwhile, Gracie talks over the telephone with Grandma and Grandpa in German.

Results

Although my university degrees are in the field of social psychology, over the years I have taught German, Italian, Spanish and French to a variety of learners in a variety of settings: middle schools, universities, adult education centers, corporate training programs. Older learners tend to want to reduce the second language to convenient formulas or general rules; they seem to presume that their task is to search their memories for grammatical principles in order to manufacture acceptable utterances. They also seem to assume that all the parts of the new language must be mastered before the learner is capable of producing anything either meaningful or useful. Older learners seem to assume, as well, that if only they were capable of a convincing, native-like accent, suddenly the new language would spring full-formed and perfect from their mouths.

It is extremely rare for native-born Americans to become fluent in a second language. Even though Spanish and many other languages are commonly spoken in the United States, social class differences mean that most middle class Americans almost never have meaningful exposure to them. There is no obvious need for second languages in everyday middle class American life. It's just not a priority.

Similarly, in high school or college or later in adult life, there are thousands of tasks more critical than foreign language drills. The number of Americans who become fluent in a seoncd language later in life is so slight that statisticians might say: the number of Americans who become fluent is less than what pure probability would predict; certainly it's less than one in a hundred; probably it's less than one in a thousand. You might even say that, for all practical purposes, it doesn't exist. It isn't "normal" for American-born adults (or even older children) to become functionally bilingual.

After eleven years of experience with early childhood immersion in a Montessori environment, however, I feel confident in saying this: if a child is neurologically and emotionally sound, if a child comes from a supportive and at least minimally literate family, and if the child is in the second language immersion Montessori environment consistently enough and long enough, then it is not normal for the child to remain monolingual. For small children in the right environment for the right amount of time, it is not a question of one in a thousand becoming functionally bilingual; it is startlingly close to one hundred out of one hundred.

For older learners, fluency in a second langauge is the end point, the culmination of many years of abstract analysis and patient toil. Small children, in contrast, enter a new language through the main gate: either they break through first to fluency, or they will not enter at all. Given the right conditions, it is not normal for small children not to become

functionally bilingual. Almost all of them do.

Older learners spend inordinate amounts of time with questions of form rather than questions of meaning; and consequently their levels of motivation are notoriously feeble. Small children, on the other hand, quickly progress to the heart of the matter: enthusiasm and meaning; purpose and delight.

Typical Trajectory, Significant Landmarks

Typically children come to InterCultura with no background in a second language. Some of them seem to assume at first that what comes from their new teachers' mouths is meaningless noise. This misapprehension evaporates very quickly because the Montessori environment is a multi-age community: there are always slightly older, somewhat more experienced children available -- children who understand perfectly well what the teacher is saying, and who are free to share what they know.

The teachers, on their part, are looking for several critical signs in the child. The first indicator is the child's blank stare. The blank stares begin to disappear within a few weeks for most children. This is the amount of time that most of them need in order to begin to establish friendships.

This is a physical indicator that reflects the child's emotional and social progress. It has very little to do with knowledge of grammar or vocabulary and even less to do with direct teaching on the part of the teacher. But it is a critical marker. Although attempts have been made to link IQ with language learning ability in early chidhood, no correlation has been found. What correlations have been found instead have to do with variables such as social skills and the child's ability to focus. (Hamayan, 1987.)

Very quickly, within the first five to seven weeks, most children begin to pick up bits and pieces of songs and frequently repeated phrases. By the end of eight to ten months, however, most children begin to produce spontaneously in the target language to the extent that a native speaker of the target language who understands no English can never the less understand them.

Within this first year, another physical indicator appears: "private speech" -- a child's ability to speak to himself. Vygotsky argued that private speech arises during the preschool years and tends to increase as children use it to guide and master their actions. It later fades away as children become able to think silently. Research indicates that the brightest children use it earliest: for them it peaks at about age four, compared with ages five to seven for average children. By age nine, it has nearly vanished for all children. Other studies indicate that this is approximately the age when children begin

to lose the ability to produce a foreign language without a foreign accent. Yet other studies have discovered a critical difference in prognosis if dyslexia (physically based handicaps in reading) is discovered before this same age. (Berk, 1986; Kohlberg, Yaeger & Hjertholm, 1968; Blakeslee, 1991.)

In any case, it is within that arc of eight to ten months after entering InterCultura that we most often notice children beginning to talk or sing to themselves. My impression is that this occurs most often while children are engaged in exercises of practical life. Vygotsky argued that the most sociable and popular children use private speech the most. Paradoxically, private speech is most stimulated by social experience, even though one observes it emerging as children engage in isolated activity. In any case, it is another important landmark in a child's progress toward bilingualism at our school.

Because preparation for writing and reading skills takes place primarily in the exercises of Practical Life and in sensory and perceptual development work, the children's progress toward literacy is not disrupted by the presence of the second language. On the contrary, the children's motivation to work with the language arts materials during their second year is greatly enhanced.

During the child's third year, children commonly are capable of writing simple stories in the second language. Some of them are capable of reading these stories and even simple commercially produced story books to the younger children. Remember: these are children predominantly from English-only monolingual families, children who, on their first day, wondered whether the words spoken by the teachers were anything other than random noise.

The most significant marker, however -- the motor which drives this trajectory -- is none other than that force which every Montesorian seeks to cultivate: the child's ability -- and willingness -- to become engaged in developmentally rooted points of interest. No matter whether the environment is a standard Montessori classroom or a second-language immersion classroom, the child who cannot or will not become engaged in his own critical developmental issues will not tolerate the combination of repetition and reflective absorption which enables children to learn, to adapt, to grow.

Moreso than in other Montessori environments, however, in the second-language immersion environment, one particular aspect of the child's motivations is especially critical: a child's ability and willingness to tolerate ambiguity and to search for meaning, that is, a child's ability and willingness to guess. Partly this depends on within each individual child; but partly it does not.

What Danny Taught Us

Each year on the last Friday in May we celebrate the progress of those children who will be leaving InterCultura to begin elementary programs at other schools. In preparation for the celebration, each of the children who will be departing over the coming summer selects a Great Work -- usually an extension or variation of some material with which he has worked and which he has particularly enjoyed at some point during his time with us. At a gathering of parents and family guests, there is an initial common celebration where we reflect on roots and light and walking, and where the children and their parents together transplant a living flower presented by the school. Finally the children break into small groups and return with their parents to the classrooms with their teachers. There each child demonstrates his Great Work for his family and friends.

Danny's Great Work was an account of the story of his life, an extension of the time line with which we celebrate each of the children's birthdays. There were six cardboard panels, each marked with a line alternately black (for winter), purple (for spring), green (for summer) and orange (for fall), with a star marking the approximate location of Danny's birth and successive birthdays. Each panel also displayed a photograph, one from each year of Danny's life. Danny had reflected on the event depicted in each picture, as well as on the people involved, dictating his stories to his teacher, Astrid Schuler, who had recorded what he had said on the back of each panel.

Danny's story was intelligent and amusing. With each panel, Danny first recounted his story in Spanish as he had done with his teacher; but then he would say: "I know that only a few of you parents understand Spanish, so now I'll tell you what I mean in English." It was perfect. Flawless. After the last panel, Danny turned to me (I was sitting on the floor, cross-legged, next to him) and said, "Doctor Mike, no dije nada de mi nueva escuela. Puedo?" When I nodded, he continued spontaneously first in Spanish and then in English, much to the amazement of the parents. When Danny had finished, I reached for the panels and explained to the parents that Danny had read his story from the Spanish recorded by his teacher on the back of the cardboard panels; but that his English translations had been completely spontaneous. There was a momentary hush among the parents, and then a whoosh of nodding, smiling, and even laughter.

Danny's family background is Swedish and Polish, not Hispanic. He lives in a suburb where few Spanish-speakers reside. How in Heaven's name does a six year old accomplish such a feat in less than three years?

If you had asked me that question during the early days of our school, I would have pointed to the connection between the child's ability to focus, the development of social skills (especially impulse control), and the development of language abilities. Children who are able to focus are less likely to violate the boundaries or personal integrity of other children. Children don't like to talk with other children who hit them or insult them. As a result, children who behave badly have less practice talking. In consequence, their language skills are likely to suffer.

From his first days, however, it was obvious that Danny was capable of a great deal of focus. He was one of the children most likely to be normalized (calm, aware, enthused) among the various children in his class. Generally speaking, impulse control was not a problem for Danny. He would easily have passed Mischel's "marshmallow test".

In the 1960s, Stanford psychologist Walter Mischel gave four year olds a test of impulse control. He brought each child to a room with a two-way mirror. He sat the child down not far from a large, sugary marshmallow. Mischel explained that he needed to go on an errand, and that the child was not to eat the marshmallow while he was away. He promised the child that if the marshmallow had not been eaten by the time he got back, then he would give the child two marshmallows. And then the child could eat them both.

About one third of the children grabbed the marshmallow as soon as Mischel was out the door. The remainder persevered, however, as long as twenty minutes without eating the marshmallow.

Mischel's follow up study fourteen years later showed that the children who had been unable to resist the marshmallow as four-year-olds "(i)n adolescence... were more likely to be seen as shying away from social contacts; to be stubborn and indecisive; to be easily upset by frustrations; to think of themselves as 'bad' or unworthy; to regress or become immobilized by stress; to be mistrustful and resentful about not 'getting enough'; to be prone to jealousy and envy; to overreact to irritations with a sharp temper, so provoking arguments and fights; (a)nd, after all those years ... still unable to put off gratification." (Goleman, 1995: 82.)

Fourteen years after Mischel's marshmallow test, Mischel discovered that children who had been able to delay gratification at the age of four had achieved startling superiority in academic accomplishment. On the Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SATs), the American college entrance exams, these children achieved scores an average of two hundred and ten points higher (210 points higher) than did those children who had not been able to resist grabbing and devouring the marshmallow. "At age four, how

children do on this test of delay of gratification is twice as powerful a predictor of what their SAT scores will be as is IQ at age four.... Poor impulse control in childhood is also a powerful predictor of later delinquency, again more so than IQ." (Goleman, 1995: 82.)

In the early days of our school it seemed to me (and it still does seem to me) that emotional development correlates with language development. What Danny taught us, however, is that individual emotional development is <u>not</u> the only factor. What Danny accomplished could never have occurred without the great leap forward in group dynamics which was occurring in the children's communities in our school during Danny's years with us.

The Developmental Stages of a Montessori Community

I. The Pre-production Stage

(Continued)

The Developmental Stages of a Montessori Community

I. The Pre-production Stage

Not only individual children but also children's communities progress through developmental stages.

In a newly founded children's community, there typically will be a mixture of children between the ages of three and six, some characterizable as "junior kindergarten 1", some as "junior kindergarten 2", and some as "senior kindergarten". When a new community is founded, the numbers of children are usually very small. In terms of behavior, the mentality of the youngest children dominates. Most of the children spend a great deal of time acting like three year olds, even though they may be older.

In a foreign language immersion Montessori children's community, this has important implications for language development. In the first year, none of the children start out speaking any of the target language. Linguists would characterize the children as "pre-productive", because they will say only isolated words, phrases or routine expressions, or will not speak in the target language at all. Their first task is to develop social and cognitive strategies which enable them to understand and eventually to develop a receptive vocabulary. Meanwhile, they get distracted easily; often they will not follow directions. They have a rigid need for routine; they need to be prepared at some length for anything other than the usual. They rely very heavily on contextual cues for understanding.

But they definitely do understand, even when confronted by an environment where the adults speak only the target language. They indicate that they understand by gestures or nods, by accurately pointing to an item or picture under discussion, by performing a logically appropriate action, by saying the names of other children, and by saying <u>yes</u> or <u>no</u> in the target language.

Teachers respond with a great deal of demonstration and repetition -- much more so than in a monolingual Montessori environment. Teachers use fixed phrases and variations of fixed phrases in many predictable situations: greetings, clean-up, etc. "Let's clean up." "When we finish, we clean up." "All the children are cleaning up." Just htink how often a teacher repeates a phrase like that hwile interacting with smal children even in monolingual settings!

Another peculiarity of the immersion environment at this stage

is this: despite the presence of children as old as six, the teachers will tend to emphasize accuracy in their speech as though they were speaking with toddlers or early three year olds.

Teachers will do this in part in order to accommodate to problems which are typical of three year olds even in their native language -- problems such as lack of prepositions or other elements of syntax. Both the three year olds and the older children may compensate for lack of prepositions in the new language with contorted word order instead.

But there is another factor, as well: learners still young in thier experience of a second l more often need to concentrate in order to understand. They have not yet developed the ability to hear and understand without eally listening. They have not yet achieved the auditory equivalent of peripheral vision. The teachers' slower, more simplified, more deliberate speech patterns at this stage provide what Montessori design principles call "isolation of the difficulty".

Peculiar though it may seem, in a newly founded foreign language immersion children's community, the children have little interest in formal language materials, no matter what their age. The teachers instead will find that they are focusing on practical life, gross and fine motor development, lessons of grace and courtesy, sensorial, and basic math manipulables. Because the community itself is young, the older children provide little of the leadership or modeling that can be expected in a mature Montessori children's community.

Teachers of children in a community at this stage need tremendous reserves of patience and firmness. Teachers who have a background of work with developmentally handicapped or other special needs children are especially good candidates for success in this type of work. Administrators seeking to hire teaching personnel should pay special attention to such qualifications.

Administrative support which helps at this stage is anything which allows the teacher to set up shelving, move walls or doors, and so on, in order to break up traffic patterns and define children's movement. Indoor gross motor space is helpful. Allowing the teacher to talk about behavior problems and brainstorm possible solutions at weekly faculty meetings also helps. It is also important to assure that a speaker of native-level English is available for all parent-teacher conferences: under stress, a teacher's English language abilities may deteriorate, and misunderstandings with parents may unnecessarily arise, no matter how tactful the teacher may actually be.

The teacher has to be absolutely committed to speaking only

the target language with the children. This means that she needs to have excellent materials design skills. In Krashen's phrase (Krashen, 1985), the environment must provide "comprehensible in-put". In Montessori's phrase, "the environment must speak". If the teacher's words cannot always be understood, then it is absolutely critical that the environment speak. The level of competence and commitment to Montessori principles needs to be even higher than what one might expect in a monolingual Montessori program.

Teachers who cannot facilitate an eloquent environment will soon be frustrated and overwhelmed by the children's behavior. At this point, they will begin scolding the children. And the language they will use will be English. If a teacher comes to this point, the immersion environment has been destroyed.

When an immersion program teacher speaks English to English-speaking children in an English-dominant society, she sends a message: the target language is not important; when push comes to shove, we switch to the majority language, the power language, English. This is an invitation to all the children to ignore the target language. The children conclude that if the teacher really wants to say something important, she can and will say it in English. Even worse, when a teacher speaks English under stress, her behavior invites some children to seek ways to actively provoke her on a regular basis. It becomes a kind of sport. Speaking English in this situation is a major tactical blunder. (Dreikurs, 1964; Dinkmeyer et al., 1989, esp. pp. 33-41 re power struggles with children.) Neither the children nor the school can move forward if a teacher becomes embroiled in such conflicts.

The beginning stages of a new children's community present special problems. Inevitably, the beginnings of a foreign language immersion children's community present unique challenges. The most effective teacher to meet the challenges involved will be a teacher with a good deal of experience in Montessori and a great deal of commitment. The parents, the children, and the administrators, too, must all be thoroughly convinced of the new children's community's mission. As the label "preproduction" implies, a good deal more will follow.

II. The Early Production Stage

The first significant shift in the structure of the children's community occurs when a number of the children begin their second year in the community, which is led by the same Lead Teacher. Now at least some of the four year olds have had the experience of being three year olds in the Montessori community. This allows them to begin to mentor and model for the new three year olds, even as they themselves find mentors and models among some of the five and six year olds who have also moved on within the

community.

Children actively comment on each others' behavior. It is critical that the teachers integrate this tendency of the children into those rules and norms which promote emotional health and learning.

One of the most successful strategies which we have developed involves materials which we refer to as Behavior and Consequence Cards. The teachers have created cartoons depicting misbehaviors such as biting, scratching, pushing, and so on, and have mounted the cartoons on red cardboard -- red meant to indicate "stop", as does the red on a traffic light. The consequence cards indicate possible solutions such as quietly thinking, apologizing, helping with clean-up, and so on; the teachers have mounted them on yellow cardboard -- yellow indicating "caution".

The teachers have used the Behavior and Consequence Cards extensively for line-time activities and for individual work, as well as to help make themselves clear when children misbehave. The four year olds in particular quickly assimilate set phrases which they associate with the cards. One of my favorites is a Consequence card depicting a child talking with a second child who is crying. Upon seeing this card, any of the four year olds in our comunidad "Los Hijos del Sol" will hold out a hand and say, " Ay, que no llores: somos todos amigos!" ("Hey, you don't have to cry: we're all friends, here.")

After the first structural shift, the children in general begin to display characteristics typical of normalized four and five year olds. They are a good deal more likely to be able to follow at least some directions. With the exception of the new children, all of the second year children have begun to be able to spontaneously produce a variety of simple words and short phrases in response to comprehensible input. They are still saying the equivalent of <u>yes</u> or <u>no</u> in the target language; but now they are also responding with one word answers to <u>either/or</u> questions. They are also responding with one-word answers to general questions: "who", "what", "when", "where", etc.

Question words still need to be very concretely referenced, however. The child who can correctly answer a question such as "what does John have in his hand?" ("John has a pencil") may not be able to answer when the word "what" is used more abstractly: "what do you do at the park?"

Similarly, children need very concrete preparation or advance explanation for anything out of the usual routine, even though they seem to have more tolerance for rearrangement of furniture and shelving than do two or three year olds in general. Contextual clues continue to be very important for the children;

but those who understand less now can begin to rely on those children who understand more to give them explanations. This is a critical landmark in the development of the community.

The emergence of interpreting among the children is critical for behavior in the classroom. Those children who successfully convey meaningful information and advice immediately win status in the eyes of the other children. Like all other Montessori environments, the Montessori immersion environment must be one which implicitly rewards competence -- not with hokey plastic happy faces distributed by an overcontrolling adult, but rather with those emotional and practical rewards which emerge spontaneously in a children's community which is emotionally healthy and alive.

The emergence of interpreting among the children is also critical for teacher effectiveness and teacher morale. It significantly reduces the temptation to punish the children and to scold them using English.

Following the first structural shift in the children's community, teachers note a heightened interest among the children in books which the children already know in English. They can tolerate whole stories of this kind in the target language because they already know the basic story line, and are able to fill in many gaps by approximating or guessing.

Even more interesting is that the teachers begin to be able to interest children in the writing and reading manipulables, just as in a monolingual Montessori environment. The reason is that all of the literacy preparation materials in the practical life and sensorial development areas are unaffected by the presence of the second language. They are as obvious and as useful when presented in Spanish or in Japanese as when they are presented in the child's native language. After the children have worked in these areas, and after there is a critical mass of knowledge of the language among the children in general, children begin to become as interested in writing and reading as four and five year olds in monolingual Montessori environments.

Even so, even the oldest children display no interest in the grammar manipulatives. The dynamics of the community and the nature of language in the community are not yet capable of provoking or supporting such points of interest.

Children in their second year in the community can produce at least two-word strings in the target language. But they often supplement with alternative strategies. For example, they may simply speak English, but with a Spanish accent or with Spanish word order or body language. While this may appear comical or even bizarre to outsiders, it reveals a significant advance

in children's underlying working knowledge of the target language. It is a resource which must not be wasted.

If the characteristics of nomalized four and five year olds become more common during this second stage in the life of the community, then it is only logical that the teachers plan whole-group times which emphasize song, rhyme and movement. Four year olds in particular have phenomenal memories for well framed sounds.

An essential part of this framework is daily line-walking. In Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook (1914), Montessori notes that children who are given the opportunity to engage in daily line-walking with appropriately metered classical music will often begin spontaneously to hum or to sing during subsequent periods of freely chosen work. In the immersion environment, this singing will often be in the target language.

Though the child doesn't realize it, this spontaneous singing represents drill and practice. Following the first structural shift, if not before, the children's community needs to embody harmony. Spontaneous singing supports spontaneous drill and memory for rhythm, rhyme, and form.

It also provides indispensible long-term preparation for the emergence of literacy. (Madaule, 1984; Tomatis, 1991; Feldenkrais, 1932.)

III. The Speech Emergence Stage

With the beginning of the next year, a second structural shift can occur. The community should now have its first group of third year children, ages five and six. These children have begun as three year olds or shortly after, and have managaed to accumulate repertoires comprising at least first-level presentations on the majority of the materials. Some of them will have mastered most of the letters of the alphabet (or, in Japanese, the phonetic syllabary, hiragana).

The characteristics of normalized five and six year olds can begin to become more typical of the children's community as a whole. Teachers can begin to introduce variations and extensions of basic materials among the third year five and six year olds. The prestige of work is enhanced; and more children engage in more work.

The older children begin to speak in longer phrases, often producing whole sentences and longer utterances. A given child may not speak fluently. There will be noticeable gaps and errors in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Yet despite these limitations in expressive abilities, some children in the community will almost always possess the vocabulary and the

facts necessary to get the message across. Meaningful class discussion begins to become possible. The level and nature of second language usage undergoes a revolution -- a revolution which touches the newest and youngest of the children.

The most senior children are now much more likely to be able to tolerate more abstract or demanding tasks. In a community at this stage, some of the oldest children will begin to take an interest in working with the Montessori grammar manipulables such as those for nouns and adjectives. Similarly, the most senior children are able to comprehend and follow more complex directions. In addition, they are much more likely to be able to explain such directions to the newer and younger children without the direct intervention of the teacher.

These latter developments have a noticeably positive effect on teacher morale. So do improvements in children's ability to hold topic.

Studies of native language development have ascertained that before the age of three, children have a great deal of difficulty maintaining topic in conversation, that is, with each exchange, they move to a different subject. By the age of three, most children can stay on a subject during three exchanges. Each year thereafter, children grow in tolerance for one more possible exchange: four at the age of four, five at the age of five, and so on. By the age of eleven, the process is finished; the average adult is able to tolerate no more than eleven exchanges on a given topic in conversation.

The implication for five year olds is that coherent dialogues can begin to emerge. This is first noticeable in the older children's fantasy play in their native language: "I'm the mommy, you're the daddy, he's the baby." Without the crutch of dialogues structured by shared fantasy, it is difficult to imagine that more sophisticated speech would emerge.

Montessorians and anti-Montessori commentators alike commonly assume that Montessori is opposed to expressions of fantasy among the children. They observe teachers and assistants who approach children lost in fantasy, and who ask: "Is that really a bomb, or is it one of the red rods?" And then they offer a choice of work in practical life. The child who is capable of cutting a banana and sharing it with friends is likely to come into meaningful social contact, of course. And the expensive Montessori material is preserved from destruction. From the point of view of most Montessorians, this is a win-win resolution.

Anti-Montessori commentators, however, presume that Montessorians who reframe children's fantasies are impairing children's language development. (Gordon and Williams-Browne, 1995: 53-54.)

I would argue that exactly the opposite is true. Montessori teachers are not destroying the child's natural and resilient drive toward fantasy; they are merely redirecting it. And frankly, since they are redirecting into the practical life area, the most concrete and potentially most social area in the curriculum, they are actually aiding language development. The child with a dish of real slices of a real banana is easier to understand and a more purposeful conversational partner than a child with a block which may or may not be a bomb.

In terms of second language acquisition, this is also a positive step. The children's fantasy talk is most likely to take place in the child's native language, the child's "language of comfort", the language spoken by the "mommy, daddy and baby" in most of our children's own homes. By substituting an inchoate fantasy manipulable with the concrete materials in practical life, the teacher makes it more likely that the child will touch on some of the target language which has been presented to him in connection with the material.

After the second structural shift, the critical developmental task for the children's community is the transformation of cooperative fantasy play into spontaneous cooperative work. But this cannot happen until yet another structural shift occurs.

IV. The Intermediate Fluency Stage

The first children to reach the third year from within the children's community are pioneers. As pioneers, they share a common problem: they have not had the option of an apprenticeship in their leadership role; instead they have had to invent their role among the children. In particular, the first group of third year children have never seen any children before them working with the most advanced materials and extensions.

But the second group of children to reach the third year from within the children's community have seen their predecessors at work. What's more, because of the nature of the multi-age environment, they have already spent an extended period of time according status and prestige to the most advanced materials and extensions. Unlike the first group who could not pass through a stage of anticipation before encountering the most advanced materials, the second group has a chance to pass through both anticipation and positive desire before they begin.

Perhaps it is this second group's experience of desire which enables them to understand the motivations of the children directly younger than they are. Perhaps it is this tacit understanding which allows children in the second group to decide among themselves how to distribute roles for work which they already understand and have already seen older children do.

Whatever the reason, this is the reality to which the term "cooperative work" corresponds. Significantly, those oldest children who become capable of structuring cooperative work usually create roles for at least some of the younger children.

This is an astonishing and important accomplishment because the younger children are now being exposed to episodes of full sentences and connected narrative which are neither directed by nor centered on the teacher. Children who are slightly older are vastly more powerful as models than any teacher can be.

In a very real way, the oldest children in this situation become the teacher's allies in helping all of the children to realize their potential. Full individual development of language abilities cannot take place without this thorough social-structural revolution.

What Norine Taught Us

One of Danny's classmates was a girl by the name of Norine. It was not immediately evident, as it had been with Danny, that Norine would flourish. On the contrary, when we first encountered Norine, she had a habit of dipping her head to the side for no apparent reason and occasionally falling from her chair. She seemed easily frustrated, and she became engaged in more conflicts than most of the girls in our school.

As time went on, we came to realize, however, that Norine enjoyed the gift of a sharp and accurate sense of humor. She had an uncanny ability to spot the issues of the other children, and to make those children laugh. Outside of Montessori or perhaps with a less indulgent Montessorian than Astrid Schuler, Norine would have been labeled as the class clown -- not a good candidate for academics. It was exactly Norine's sense of humor and the power which it brought her which enabled her to be one of the leaders in the organization of cooperative work. Despite the veneer of misbehavior, Norine had nothing resembling an attention deficit disorder. On the contrary, Norine had remarkable social skills, including a wonderful ability to observe and assess the reactions of other children; as one might expect, language skills developed apace.

In the spring of Norine's last year with us, we administered the Student Oral Proficiency Assessment (SOPA), a video-based evaluation originally developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, D.C. for use in elementary school foreign language immersion programs. SOPA involves an adult sitting at a table with two first graders who are given a number of tasks: identifying colors, counting, following simple one-part directions, retelling a simple story while pointing to pictures in a familiar story book.

The author of the SOPA, Nancy Rhodes, graciously assisted us in adapting the instrument for our significantly younger children.

Norine's session before the video camera was phenomenal. Both Norine and the three year old who shared the session with her sailed through identification of colors and responses to simple commands. But when it came to the story, Norine really began to glow. Not only could she freely recount the story of Goldilocks, she also held the book up for the camera in order to display the picture to which she was referring, and then she began to reveal her opinions of the bears. All in Spanish. Not a word in English.

Norine is the second child in an Irish-American family in which no language other than English has been spoken for many generations. Her facility with Spanish is a truly remarkable accomplishment.

Now let me tell you what Norine taught us.

Less than a week after Norine's magnificent performance, I happened to be talking with Norine and a band of her usual cronies. A five and a half year old boy from the other Spanish immersion community joined in the conversation. I was speaking with the children in Spanish, and James, who had been with us only a few months by that time, protested, saying, "Hey, I don't know any Spanish!" Norine looked at me with a completely serious expression and said, "Oh, I don't speak any Spanish either." Norine? No Spanish? As you can imagine, I was astounded. When I protested, Norine persisted. "I really don't know any Spanish. I just know how to guess."

A few years after this incident I recounted the story to a colleague, John Hilliard, a professional linguist who works for the Illinois Resource Center for Bilingual Education. John was born in Spain, and came to the United States as a child with no knowledge of English. At the end of the year after he had arrived, his teacher administered a written examination. John completed the test, and then looked up at the teacher and raised his hand. "Teacher," he asked, "who wrote the answers here?" He had somehow failed to understand that he was capable of writing a test in English. John's feeling, looking back, is that many childhood bilinguals fail to realize what they really know.

My own conclusion is that we need to involve children more directly in reflecting on their own work. In the case of early childhood bilinguals, we need to convince the children that guessing is already knowing, and that it is perfectly legitimate. Recognition memory precedes recollection, but it is still legitimate knowledge. Recognition memory, after all, is the

second period in Montessori's classic Three Period Lesson -- the strategy which she defined as one of the primary vehicles for vocabulary acquisition.

What Norine taught us is that we need to incorporate Whole Language strategies into the Montessori language arts curriculum, especially when we have second language learners in the community. While the phonics and grammar manipulables are indispensible, they cover only two of Goodman's three "cueing systems": phonetic decoding and guesses based on grammatical

(Continued)

clues (e.g., "I want to...": the next word must be a verb, it is more likely to be "go" than "goat", and a novice reader who recognizes no more than "g" may guess the word or a good equivalent quite correctly). The cueing system which remains is much broader but no less useful than the other two: guessing from clues in the environment, including physical objects, daily routines, and the child's prior knowledge.

Conscious planning aimed at enabling second language learners to guess is what linguists call "sheltering". A great deal of sheltering is implicit in the materials and routines common to Montessori children's communities for children three to six years of age. Montessori teachers' use of color coding and other built-in hints -- the very notion of built-in feedback ("controllo di errore") and the elimination of potential distractions ("isolation of the difficulty") --all provide sheltering for second language learners. Whole Language strategies fit beautifully in this mix because they extend the clarity and spirit of the Montessori manipulables into regions as yet unexplored by most Montessorians.

"Comprehensible Input" and the Classic Montessori Manipulables

Because most of the parents inquiring about InterCultura speak only English, they tend to be rather skeptical that children really understand. When the teachers are restricted to the target language, a new child might not understand.

What the parents need to hear first is an explanation of the social nature of the environment. The Montessori environment bears no resemblance to the high school or college lecture hall; in some ways it can be compared to the arrangement of an art studio with a master artist who is available to explain how to manage materials and to reflect on learners' projects and goals. The learners themselves are free to move, observe and comment. Purposeful movement and reality-oriented language are encouraged.

When a new child doesn't understand, he has access to slightly older or more experienced children who do understand. Children who do understand are perfectly happy to share what they know. In this kind of environment, a great deal of prestige attaches to such abilities.

The teacher herself needs to be more more demonstrative, more expressive than teachers in monolingual environments. She needs to calculate all routines so that children can easily guess what's coming. She needs to design all materials so that the gates are open for children's experimentation and insight.

Once I've said this to parents inquiring about our school, I

get out Montessori's classic sound boxes. I ask the parents whether they speak Japanese or German or Spanish or one of my other language. I tell them that I need them to be in the same position as their three year old on his first day at InterCultura. I set out the six red-topped cylinders in a column touching the right side of the wooden storage boxes; and then I set out the six blue-topped cylinders on the left.

Then I make eye contact with one of the parents and point at my ear and say, for example, in Japanese: "Kiite. Kiite kudasai." I pick up the first cylinder on the left and shake it; and then do the same with the first cylinder on the right: "Onaji? Onaji desu ka?" Of course, I've set out the matching cylinder to be the very last, not the very first; so then I answer my own question, saying: "Iie. Iie. Onaji ja nai." The procedure varies only when we reach one cylinder that's almost, but not quite the same: "Aa. Hotondo onaji. Hotondo." I let my hand waiver or I shrug as I set the cylinder slightly to the right, and then go on.

When I finally reach the proper match, I do my best to look surprised, and exclaim: "Onaji! Onaji desu!" I run my index fingers along the top edge of the open storage box and say: "Hako. Hako desu." As I begin to place the two cylinders into the box, I comment: "Hako ni iremashoo."

Several minutes have passed during which nothing but Japanese has been spoken.

I look up and say, "You don't speak a word of Japanese, right? But still, you understood everything that I said." And then, when I see the parents nodding, I say what hasn't yet occurred to them: "A three year old understands this, too."

At this point, I explain a few Montessori design principles, including isolation of the difficulty: "There's only one thing that stands out: just the sound. Is it the same or is it not the same?"

In the terminology of current linguists, of course, this is "comprehensible input". It is made possible by careful "sheltering" which is achieved through basic principles of design in the creation of materials.

The same kind of "guessability" is the goal of integrated thematic units and lesson plans, and is also the aim of Whole Language techniques. The difference, of course, is that these latter techniques address the question of what to do during group times.

Whole Language and Other Useful Strategies

Perhaps the most eloquent spokesperson for Whole Language among Montessorians is Joy Turner, the editor of Montessori Life, the American Montessori Society's quarterly. By publishing Language Arts: A Montessori Teacher Resource Book (1992) and "How Do You Teach Reading?" (1995), Joy Turner has rendered a tremendous service to all Montessorians. She has summarized over seventy different Whole Language activities in the format of a standard Montessori Album, including both initial presentations, variations and extensions.

Other sources of ideas include What's Whole in Whole Language by Kenneth Goodman (1989), Literacy for Young Children by Terry S. Sallinger (1995), and almost anything by Lucy Calkins. Another interesting source of ideas is Yvonne and David Freeman's Whole Language for Second Language Learners, published by Heinemann (1992).

Another good source of ideas is anything written by Mary Clay, the New Zealander who devised the very impressive Reading Recovery approach -- a one-on-one tutorial approach for first semester first graders who have been identified to be at risk for failure in reading and writing. Clay's work integrates manipulables reminiscent of the movable alphabet with much more experientially oriented techniques.

Another wonderful source of ideas is anything written by Spenser Kagan, one of the authors most closely associated with the development of structured cooperative learning. Many of his ideas are more appropriate for somewhat older groups of children; but games such as Battleship can easily be adapted to fit any of the seriation materials in the sensory development area by clipping together two manila file folders which make it difficult for one partner to peek at the patterns which the other partner creates, and which the first is supposed to reproduce. These are natural stimulants for purposeful language which build on materials already available in the environment. (High, J.: 1993; Kagan, S.: 1994; Cummings, C.: 1990.)

Whole Language and the other techniques mentioned may feel somewhat alien to many Montessorians. This is probably because many Whole Language activities arise from teacher facilitated experiences which involve several children or even the whole class. The teacher seems to have too high a profile. At first, the teacher may also appear to be the only source of feedback for the children.

By contrast, Montessori teacher training concentrates on one-on-one tutorial-style presentations of the classic Montessori materials, and techniques for preparing variations and extensions of them. In Montessori, we tend to say "the lesson plan is inherent in the material"; but this may give the impression that we do not need to address the subject of lesson planning

for group times.

Perhaps the potential of group times needs to be more closely examined. While not all Whole Language techniques are based on groups, techniques such as LEA (language experience approach), writing workshops, and so on, offer some valuable insights. Perhaps their most valuable aspect is their respect for children's needs for comprehensibility and motivation (valid points of interest). In this sense, they may serve as thought-provoking extensions of basic Montessori materials and techniques -- just what potentially bilingual children in Montessori environments need.

Some Specific Recommendations

The following recommendations come from the reflections of InterCultura lead teachers Rosario Sanchez, Astrid Schuler, and Kazumi Nagayama, as well as from my own thoughts.

1. Survival Vocabulary Goals

One of the chief needs of second-language learners is an integrated curriculum of survival vocabulary which teachers can and should consciously emphasize. Nouns come relatively quickly to children; but other parts of speech are much less accessible. Teachers need to draw up actual lists of words and phrases which they intend to emphasize whenever the opportunity arises. They need to establish reasonable, flexible goals; and they need to identify children who have accomplished those goals.

2. Repetition of Key Grammatical Forms

Another critical need is clarification of standard working grammar. I don't mean the identification of parts of speech; I mean familiarity with the implications of basic forms, a familiarity which can gradually move toward conscious control, but only after a thorough working knowledge has been established.

Verb forms are particularly thorny. One of our Lead Teachers has developed the knack of pulling present, past and future tense forms out of some of the simplest exchanges; she does this so elegantly and with such precise connection to context that no child would ever suspect that he was being led through a drill.

3. Presentations Utilizing Key Phrases

Typically initial presentation of practical life materials such as pouring and spooning are given in silence. This enhances the child's attention to the material in much the same way that turning off the sound on the television enhances our ability to observe the picture. A second presentation on the same

material may introduce specific vocabulary.

For more complicated materials, more complicated explanations may be given from the start in monolingual classes. But in a class of second language learners, the teacher needs to be much more circumspect about general conversation during presentations. The teacher needs to decide in advance which key phrases she wishes to emphasize; most of the children won't yet be able to understand or appreciate any extensive explanations.

4. Rhythm, Rhyme and Movement on Line

During group times, rhythmic repetition is essential. Children should break words into syllables, clap, march and move in ways that support memory. With rhythm, rhyme and movement as mnemonic devices, children may be able to tolerate introduction of words and phrases that they might not be able to absorb outside group times.

5. Objects, Pictures, Dramatization

Group times are the right time also to display objects and pictures. The majority of the time should be spent in Second Period manipulation.

Dramatization of the words and phrases in songs may be more orderly and manageable than random fantasy dramatization. This may be because even children who are not taking a turn can participate by singing, clapping, playing triangles, and so on.

6. Group Reading Based on Routines

After a song or other routine utilizing picture cards or objects has become familiar, the teacher can write in key phrases on the cards. These can be used during subsequent repetitions of the song or routine with either a teacher or a child pointing to the words.

7. "Tell Ms. Kazumi"

When a child comes to one teacher asking for something, the teacher may reply, "Oh, you want to say...." and then send the child to the other teacher to say it. The child already knows what he wants, and therefore already has a basic grasp of the new words; in addition, the child must carry the new words only a short distance, relying only on short-term memory or, more likely, repetition in "private speech" (talking to himself).

8. Syllabication, Distinct Pronunciation

If a child has not understood something said at normal speed

with normal pronunciation, slow down and try again, breaking words into clear units of meaning. But be careful not to attach any sign of annoyance or displeasure to this habit; the children may associate this with the treatment normally accorded to toddlers. Done insensitively, it may offend rather than help. So if a child is successfully comprehending speech at normal speed, do not slow down.

9. Reflecting Back

If a child's statement is incomprehensible due to mispronunciation or grammatical error, just repeat what you think the child said in correct form. Make eye contact with the child; search for a nod confirming that you have correctly understood. Do not imply that the child is incompetent or otherwise at fault for the mispronunciation or error. Though you are commenting on form, make sure that you are reacting primarily to what the child means to say.

10. Classroom Rules and Easy Language

From the first day, major emphasis needs to be given to the basic rules of the classroom, especially children's need to respect each other.

Children who are frustrated or uncomfortable for any reason will have more trouble abiding by classroom rules. Therefore, although it is important to challenge children to grow in their understanding of the new language, it is also important that the teacher constantly repeat words and phrases that the children understand without difficulty. This is important because it builds children's self-confidence, and it gives them the courage to take the risks necessary to learn more.

11. Buddies/Helpers

Do everything you can to encourage children who understand more to interpret or otherwise help children who understand less. Try both older/younger and same-age combinations.

12. Pull-out Groups

You may find that the differences in language ability between the early three year olds and the six year olds are so great that the youngest children simply don't have access to the points of interest that satisfy the older ones.

If this is the case, make the whole group times relatively brief. Then do special pull-out groups for the older children. You may be able to take the older children to the multipurpose room or to other quiet space, or you may be able to organize separate

"lesson time" within the classroom itself as in Montessori elementary programs.

Whether or not you take the pull-out group outside the classroom, make sure that you give the older children an opportunity every day to show something of what they're learning to all the children during whole group time.

Remember that during pull-out time, the other teacher may choose to work with the smaller children in a group of their own, reviewing basic classroom rules, basic words, simple songs, games and movements.

13. Environmental Labels

Post environmental labels and signs especially in those places where their meaning will be obvious.

14. Message Centers

Set up message centers near the classroom door so that parents can leave messages every day for their children. Because most parents don't speak the target language, set out five or six different photocopied formats. Typical formats include:

_____ (child's name),
I love you.
Dad

_____ (child's name),
What was your favorite work today?
Mom

_____ (child's name),
What songs did you sing?
Mom

_____ (child's name),
What was fun at the park?
Dad

You can also set out small matching sheets that children can choose to paste on as replies; or they may choose to copy free-hand; or they may choose to make something up, sounding it out; or they may choose to make a drawing as a reply; or they may combine all of the above.

The messages themselves will be in the target language; so you have to remember to write the translation in small letters at the bottom of the sheets so that monolingual parents will understand.

Remember to post all of the children's names in the message center. The parents will learn how to write their own child's name, even if it means learning to write the child's name in Japanese! Just make sure that the parents understand that they are helping to keep their child's motivation high for literacy.

The message center is well received for other reasons, as well. Parents of all-day children seem especially to appreciate the

exchange of notes with the children.

15. Listening Centers

A simple, sturdy tape recorder and a microphone can be placed in the classroom. Each child needs a cassette of his or her own. But the presentation needs to be made in pairs or in groups of three.

Children should be able to sing or read or tell stories with a friend; and they need to be able to identify their own cassettes and return them to their holder.

The listening center needs to have an unobtrusive place in the classroom. It needs to be treated as though it were any other material.

Younger children or less normalized children may have difficulty with the listening center. It may be necessary to set up the listening center only when the younger children are napping. Or you may have to restrict the younger children's use of the center to listening to pre-recorded songs and tape-recorded books.

Those younger children who are sufficiently normalized, however, should be introduced to the listening center as soon as possible. The reason is this: every time a child speaks into the cassette, he's making a record which later can be analyzed.

Bilingual parents can be given a copy of the SOPA rating scale or some other similar chart of growth in comprehension and speaking abilities. They can then listen to a sample of tapes for individual children and rate them. These ratings can be compared to the teachers' ratings. What emerges is a relatively unobtrusive assessment of children's progress -- a proof that most children flourish, or occasionally a red flag marking special needs.

Meanwhile, the listening center demands relatively little care on the part of the teacher. And it stimulates lots of singing, talking, and other good times.

16. Group Dictation (LEA)

Joy Turner recommends "experience charts". Any common experience shared by a group of children can be discussed by that group. Teachers can use rolls of calculator paper or large flip charts or dry boards to record a small number of children's remarks. Each child will know more or less what he said, and will be able to guess which statement is his own, and also participate in rearranging the children's remarks into a coherent account.

Books such as Coomb's Developing Competent Readers and Writers and Sallinger's Literacy for Young Children give detailed instructions for LEAs. Freeman and Freeman's Whole Language for Second Language Learners is another wonderful source of ideas.

17. KWHL

Another useful technique is the KWHL chart -- something that can be done with a group or with an individual child.

Before introducing a new topic, the teacher encourages children to talk about what they already know about it (K); the teacher records the children's comments briefly and uncritically, as a profesional group facilitator would.

Then the children talk about what they would like to discover (W); and the teacher similarly records it.

Next the teacher helps the children to explore how they might investigate what they would like to discover (H, for "how"). This is the point at which the teacher can describe options, and ask children to make commitments to working with one or another material.

Finally, after children have worked with materials, they can come together again to reflect on what they have learned (L); and the teacher once again can serve as a facilitator and recorder, encouraging children to reflect about what they have learned.

KWHL is a wonderful format for conferences with children who have begun keeping work journals.

18. A Moment for Reflection during Presentations

Younger children also can profit from reflecting on prior experience before a new work is presented. This has value in terms of assessment; it reveals something about a child's readiness for the new material, as well as his ability to generalize from earlier, similar experience. But it also serves to repeat and expand earlier vocabulary. And this is one of the major advantages of a consistent, integrated curriculum such as the curriculum in Montessori.

The usual advice in Montessori teacher training courses is: return to the material for a second presentation; concentrate on vocabulary then. However, even though every one of the Montessori materials does provide good material for a Three Period Lesson on key vocabulary, it's rare that teachers have the time to give a three period lesson on materials other than those directly in the language arts area and in certain parts

of the sensory development area. Usually, teachers make a mental note to return for a second presentation in order to formally present vocabulary. But the second opportunity may never present itself.

If the teacher makes a habit of reflecting on prior experience before a new work is presented, it will become immediately obvious whether the child has acquired the vocabulary connected with previous work. With no extra effort, the teacher in turn will be able to suggest appropriate options among which the child can choose.

It is especially important to reflect on prior experience utilizing prior vocabulary when the teacher introduces extensions and variations. In fact, this is one of the best of all possible reasons for designing and introducing extensions and variations: they help to shelter instruction and provide unburdensome repetition and recombination for second language learners.

19. The Special Role of Variations and Extensions

The number of variations and extensions of Montessori material in bilingual classrooms should be greater than in monolingual classrooms. This is because a greater number of extensions and variations adds to the "guessability" of the environment; it also enhances children's self-confidence, and also stands a chance of improving levels of normalized behavior.

20. Prior Knowledge and Reading

Similarly, helping children reflect on prior experience is an excellent way to introduce a storybook. By reflecting on prior experiences related to the topic of the book, children begin to access prior knowledge. They begin to be able to guess where the story might lead them. They begin to be able to examine illustrations and predict what might happen in the story.

Through this process of contextualization and prediction, children are challenged to become active participants in a search for meaning. Second language learners are greatly aided by this kind of framework-building -- what Vygotsky referred to as "scaffolding".

21. Other Ideas

There are many other really wonderful ideas that we haven't yet tried out or which for one reason or another don't currently fit the situation of the particular children who happen now to be with us at InterCultura. Examples include "story starter" cards for the writing center in the classroom; reading/writing materials located in every curriculum area (e.g., signs, labels, "how-to" cards; note pads and pencils for making lists, signs,

notes, etc.); dramatic play props based on cooperative themes; etc.

One of the best sources of ideas appropriate for the Montessori environment is Joy Turner's work. In the Summer, 1995 issue of Montessori Life (an excellent issue featuring language arts), Turner published "A Whole Language Checklist for the Teacher" -- the result of an AMS regional seminar on Whole Language and Montessori.

All of these strategies provide exciting tools for enhancing the comprehensibility of the environment so that second language learners will flourish. In the end, however, we must allow the children themselves to teach us what is appropriate.

What Rudi Taught Us

Rudi is an exceptionally absent-minded four year old. He comes by his absent-mindedness quite honestly, I think: all four of his grandparents are college teachers. Though I don't know whether absent-mindedness is a trait which can be inherited, I do know that Rudi's absent-mindedness can present tremendous obstacles.

Not long ago, Rudi's teacher presented doll washing to him. Although Rudi seemed to enjoy the experience, he failed to understand some of the basic limits inherent in the material. When he went to the water source with the pitcher, he kept on returning with more and more water until finally the doll's tub overflowed; and then he went back for more.

Subsequently, Rudi's teacher gave him a new presentation on the material, emphasizing the little nail polish line on the side of the rubber tub which indicates that the tub is full. She touched the line, running her finger along it, saying, "Hasta aqui" ("Up to here").

The other day, Rudi's teacher was talking with me about Rudi. She said that Rudi wasn't making the tub overflow anymore. But instead he was doing something so strange. Before he put his hands on the pitcher, even before he started walking toward the water source, he began singing to himself in Spanish: "Hasta aqui, hasta aqui." Four year olds love to sing and they love to move; rhythmic singing and rythmic movement are the physical embodiment of their capacity for memory.

With his song and with his rhythm, Rudi had found a way to conquer the handicap of his absent-mindedness. The key to Rudi's victory had been handed to him directly by his teacher: it was a critical phrase in a second language presented at the right moment in an obvious and fully contextualized way.

Now that's survival vocabulary!

One of the critical advantages in language learning which small children enjoy is "private speech". This is exactly what Rudi was doing: he was talking to himself.

It was Vygotsky who pointed out that private speech is a child's way of maintaining the presence of another person. There is an important difference between what a child can do without assistance and what a child cannot yet do except with assistance. The distance between these two points is what Vygotsky called the child's Zone of Proximal Development. According to Vygotsky, a child will narrow the gap between what he can and cannot yet do by unconsciously utilizing private speech to keep his helpers somehow present.

Rudi's teacher had accessed a critical framework for Rudi. The proof of the teacher's accuracy was the child's transformation of the teacher's speech into an element of his own personal "private speech".

Teachers of potentially bilingual children need to search continuously for this kind of language: language which illuminates frameworks of meaning; language which empowers children. In a monolingual classroom, perhaps such sheltering can be left to chance. But in a children's community with potentially bilingual children, the teacher needs to consciously plan and consciously cultivate dramatically contextualized language. When "the teachable moment" arrives, the teacher of potentially bilingual children needs to be prepared.

What the child will actually do with the linguistic framework which the teacher prepares, we cannot know. But in the second language environment, it is unlikely that the mind and spirit of the child will be able to unfold unless we adults continuously struggle with questions of design and guessability, a linguistically prepared environment.

When a child retreats into private speech, even then we are with him. And this is how we know that we have succeeded in our attempt "to follow the child".

What Lilly Taught Us

A word of caution from a lovely six year old by the name of Lilly.

Born in Argentina, Lilly's home language was Spanish; she picked up English as a three year old in our Japanese-language community. Since the children are always free to speak whatever language occurs to them, English is always available among the children, even though the teachers in the immersion programs

purposely refrain from speaking it.

At the age of four, Lilly's memory for rhythm and rhyme was extraordinary. She could remember long, long series of verses in Japanese: verses of nearly Homeric length. Her father is a professional musician who plays cello together with Lilly. Perhaps this has something to do with Lilly's wonderful memory.

Not long before Lilly graduated, however, I discovered that when I would use a Japanese word or phrase outside of the context of one of Lilly's songs, she was not able to recognize it. I was quite alarmed. I understood that Lilly's parents were in the habit of dropping her off at 10:00 or 11:00 in the morning, after the morning line time and after most of the offerings of what the children call "big works". But I never would have guessed that she could not understand the parts of those songs which she so vigorously performed.

Similarly, although she could sing the names of all forty six of the Japanese phonetic characters, she was barely able to write even two or three. In the Roman alphabet she was able to read and write sixteen of the twenty six letters; but this she had picked up from the Anne Frank Community, our English-language children's community which meets daily from 2:30 to 6:00 p.m.

What Lilly taught us is to challenge children to analyze those things which they have holistically absorbed. Just as a child who can recite his numbers from one to ten needs to encounter the Spindle Box in math in order to appreciate the uniqueness of each number apart from the series, each child needs to encounter unique words and isolated sounds and even grammatical analysis (the Grammar Box).

Once we discovered what had happened with Lilly, we were able to begin correcting the imbalance. But what Lilly taught us stands as an important lesson: no matter how exciting we may find one or another strategy, the lives and progress of real children are the only worthy determinants of our methods. With potentially bilingual children, <u>both</u> sheltered Whole Language guessing and detail oriented analysis need to play a role.

Clearly, we cannot do this without active and continuous assessment. Neither language abilities nor content area knowledge are sufficient unto themselves.

Even so, having said all this, I feel compelled to state that while I am greatly concerned when I discover a child who does not guess accurately, I am much more troubled when I discover a child who has forsworn his joy in guessing. An unwillingness to guess is a red flag of distress, an all-points alert for evil afoot in a child's ability to communicate.

Potentially Bilingual Children in Montessori Environments: Reflections, Recommendations

Though a good number of foreign language immersion Montessori schools (English-medium Montessori schools) do exist abroad, InterCultura is unique in the United States.

The more common experience of bilingualism in American Montessori schools involves a small number of children in the classroom who speak little or no English when they begin.

Our experience at InterCultura indicates that young children's growth toward bilingualism is both resilient and robust under the right circumstances. The basic Montessori curriculum and standard Montessori practices supply the rudiments of what most children need. The three to six classroom is an exceptionally good environment for the development of what Collier refers to as BICS, that is, basic social language. The development of Cognitive and Academic Language (CALP), on the other hand, appears to be more problematic. (Collier, 1992.)

Montessori teachers of potentially bilingual children need to incorporate a number of conscious strategies, a few of which have been enumerated above. Unlike dominant-language speaking middle class children in an immersion program in suburban Chicago, minority-language speaking children may require special native language support in subject matter areas which are more abstract or otherwise more demanding. This is especially true for older potentially bilingual children enrolled in the elementary curriculum (especially 9 to 12 and 12 +) where there are fewer manipulables.

In my discussion of the stages of development of the Montessori children's community most effective for promoting bilingualism, I have relied primarily on characteristics enumerated in a document entitled "Stages of Second Language Acquisition" (Alvarez-Martina, et al., 1984). I did not include certain characteristics which are <u>not</u> typical of children at InterCultura, but which research indicates to be typical of minority-language monolinguals struggling to become bilingual in environments which are not prepared for them. These characteristics include items such as the following: sometimes appears quiet or expressionless; does not get actively involved; starts to get involved, but holds back and acts shy; responds only minimally in his/her own language. Where the second language learner is isolated and atypical, he or she is a child at risk. In situations such as these, children do not have either the comfort or self-confidence necessary in order to hazard the next indispensable guess.

Montessori Teacher Training Courses need to be required to sensitize teachers to the issues and the options. Every candidate for certification as a Montessori teacher should be able to identify the typical problems of second language learners, and also to demonstrate a working knowledge of framework-building "sheltering" techniques such as those derived from both cooperative learning and Whole Language. Candidates for certification should also be able to demonstrate an ability to carry on systematic, unobtrusive assessment which allows children to reflect on and assess their own growth in language skills.

The Montessori children's community possesses tremendous power to enhance the growth of children's abilities in more than one language. The full potential of the Montessori community will not be realized, however, without conscious planning on the part of teachers who have been trained to recognize the special needs of children on the verge of bilingualism.

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